THE
BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL
JOURNAL.

VOL. XIV.] Wednesday, June 29, 1836. [NO. 21.

ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF MEDICAL SCIENCE.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

It cannot be denied that the progress of medical science, the branch of it called surgery excepted, has been slow, compared with other physical sciences, and an investigation of the causes of this difference must be interesting to the philanthropist and the physician. The history of medicine, as far as its records are transmitted to us, proves that its origin and gradual advancement depended upon accidental discoveries, upon the venturesome enterprizes of empirics, upon the cultivation of other sciences, particularly of chemistry, and, above all, upon the accurate and careful observations of sagacious, cautious, and philosophical men, and the legitimate inferences drawn by them from the testimony of their own, or of the senses of others. There can be no doubt that the same means of improvement will continue to produce the same result, provided they be not checked in their operation by a wrong education of medical men, and by circumstances calculated to discourage men of real merit, devoted to the advancement of the science.

It is a singular trait in the character of some men, to be fond of doubting everything that is not, or cannot be proved by the same evidence of identity a geometrical proposition may be demonstrated. This scepticism has been introduced frequently by men, who, unacquainted with the philosophy of common sense and the works and phenomena of nature, and misled by over-abstracted metaphysical ideas, extended this imaginary test to natural theology, to morality, to all physical, and to medical science in particular, and did real injury to weak minds, who, not used to examine for themselves, were easily led astray. We may admit that the testimony of our senses, which we generally regard as the best evidence, is often deceitful or defective, as it rests upon the variable state of the medium through which external or internal communications pass to our senses, the condition and limited capacity of the sensual organs, our imagination, which is prone to alter our sensual ideas, upon our judgment, which is not always correct or unbiased, and our memory, which is frequently faithless. The testimony of other men, exposed to the same imperfections as our own, is subject, moreover, to the uncertainty of the capacity, accuracy and veracity of the witnesses. We may concede, also, that even one that is well acquainted with all the necessary branches of science, denominated preparatory to the study of medicine, has to contend with difficulties* of a peculiar kind, when engaged in the examination of the truth of medical principles, and their practical application; he has to compare them with the symptoms of a great multitude of diseases, which are variable, fleeting phenomena, modified by a multiplicity of circumstances, arising out of the differences of the mental and bodily constitutions of the subjects he has to observe; he has to compute the degrees of variation according to their age, sex, diet, habits, climate, season, &c., analyze the complicated effects of these operating causes, ascertain if possible the assailed organs, and their idiopathic or sympathetic enemy. He is often called by day and by night, in all seasons and changes of weather, to attend to threatening sudden emergencies, when no time is allowed for proper examination and reflection, and his mind confounded by the interference of ignorance and folly, and scenes trying to any man's soul. The naturalist or chemist has no such difficulties to encounter; he can place his objects before him, fix his attention on one or a few of them at a time, and as long as he pleases, exclude most influences from varying his proceedings; his tranquillity of mind remains cool and undisturbed, and the task to improve his science becomes easy, pleasant and successful.

But notwithstanding these real obstacles that impede the progress of medical science, its history proves that there were many great and excellent characters, whose genius triumphed over the greater part of these difficulties, and to whom we are indebted for a rich treasure of principles, founded upon accurate observation and correct induction, or, in other words, upon generalization of ideas. This great faculty, to form general or abstract principles, and our innate propensity to exercise it in aid of our limited memory, is the most valuable gift man received from the hands of the Author of his existence. It enables us to view and critically examine our ideas of the qualities, conditions and relations of things and phenomena, compare their analogy and diversity, separate the first from the latter, unite what agrees together into one idea, and to mark it with a word which empowers us, by the law of association, to recall at once a mass of valuable knowledge, thus concentrated, whenever we want it, and to apply it either to the explanation of things and phenomena, or as a law to direct us in our practical pursuits. By following the same mental process, and comparing again the discovered general principles, we obtain higher and higher and more comprehensive ones;—or, in other words, from single ideas, we form species; from these, genera; and from genera, orders and classes, and create a system. There is no human being that does not exercise this innate propensity more or less; and the difference between man and man in this respect amounts to this, that one is more capable of exercising and applying to a greater extent this all-important, most estimable power, than the other.

It can be proved, that no science can boast of as great a number of illustrious, magnanimous and learned men, as our science, though none is as extensive, complicated and difficult. The scientific world is indebted to many of them for their great and beneficial discoveries in various branches of literature; but I shall, for obvious reasons, sketch only a few of those who particularly distinguished and immortalized themselves by their great and meritorious devotion to medical science, by their superior spirit of observation, by the works they left us as fine models of medical induction, and by their exemplary and elevated moral character, justly and generally admired by their contemporaries, and whose memory is held sacred to this day by all who venerate and love what is great, noble and good in man.

Hippocrates has been placed at the head of our profession by the unanimous voice of the enlightened part of mankind, from his age down to the present era, and is justly entitled to the honorable and endearing name, "father of medical science." With unexampled industry and perseverance he examined the chaotic mass of observations accumulated for centuries in the temple of Æsculapius, and contained in the tabulis votivis, which he compared, with critical judgment, with his own knowledge and that of his contemporaries, and drew from them inferences or general principles, with the stamp of truth and immortality on the face of them. No principle in our general and special pathology is more correct, more comprehensive, and more fruitful of successful practice, than his great and fundamental one, that the plurality of diseases, begotten by antecedent and occasional causes, reside originally in the first and second class of the digestive organs, and that the early and thorough evacuation of morbid gall and other matter from the viscera of the first class by emetics and carthartics, will cure the greatest number of acute and chronic complaints, and prevent their malignity and fatality. This is the amount of the most of his aphorisms, though some others leave no doubt, in my mind, that he understood the necessity of having recourse to venesection in well-marked inflammatory diseases. His faithful description of the symptoms and prognoses and treatment of many diseases, his ideas of diet, exercise, influence of air, of passions, sleep and wakefulness, excretion and retention, his five questions in examining the sick, his doctrine of perfect and imperfect crisis, and critical days, &c., prove his sagacity and spirit of observation, his integrity and modesty ; and his beauty of diction will forever command the admiration of his works and of the superior merits of their author.

Boerhaave will be regarded forever, if justice be done to his transcendant merit, as the Hippocrates of modern Europe. He highly appreciated and introduced again the observations and principles of the founder of correct medical practice, which were almost forgotten during so many ages of darkness, when even the few learned men had to serve in soccage the most abject superstition of a despotic and ignorant hierarchy. The practice of the chemical school, so prevalent yet at the time he commenced the practice of physic, consisted in confining all, laboring under acute fevers, in narrow chambers, burying them in heavy featherbeds, excluding light, cool and fresh air, prohibiting cooling drinks, administering to them the most heating drugs, spicy tinctures, essences, and distilled oils, with the design of producing sweat, by which absurd and distressing means innumerable putrid and malignant diseases were generated, and the lives of a greater number of people destroyed than by the invention of gunpowder. It was Boerhaave who put a stop to this murderous practice, taught and exercised the rational laws of the antiphlogistic method, discovered some valuable remedies in chronic complaints, incurable before, and became instrumental in saving the lives of thousands.

His fame extended over all Europe, and, as professor of medicine, botany and chemistry, he had great numbers of disciples and admirers from all parts of the continent and from Great Britain, among whom the illustrious Haller, and many others, proved the value of such a teacher. The following character, given him by one of them, is so just and so concise, as to induce my copying it: " Vir erat animi magnitudine, morumque simplicitate, probitate, suavitate insignis, vere Christianus, in omnes homines, quin in ipsos adversarios benevolus, in adfirmando modestus, in refutando parcissimus, in tanta fortunarum amplitudine, propriæ imbecillitatis ingenuus confessor, meritis laudibus minime elatus, et aliene virtutis æquissimus æstimator; eloquio valuit, brevi-pura et mascula ;dictione uteas; summo judicio pollens, et gravus matheseos, historiæ naturalis, chimiæ, omnisque veteris doctrinæ, artem medican magnis erroribus corruptam restituit. Ingenio et scientia parem forte secula reddent, sedan unquam parem animum? Discamus atanto vivo, virtatem et indefessam industriam veram esse ad forturatam vitam, ac comporamus ad suum exemplum et vitam et studia nostra."

Cullen richly deserves to be esteemed as one of the most eminent, learned, and useful medical characters, and every medical student would be highly benefited by studying his classical works; the practical part of which, I consider to be a very excellent introduction in the practice of physic. This upright, modest, and noble-minded man was intimately acquainted with the ancient and modern medical literature, did ample justice to the merits of Boerhaave and his disciples, and adopted many of their principles, which his own extensive experience confirmed. Aware that a perfect nosological system cannot be formed, until the knowledge of single diseases, and the science in general, attains a higher perfection, he examined all the various schemes of his predecessors with great industry and critcal acumen, and succeeded at last, by following the strict rules of induction, to build a system of nosology, superior in clearness, precision, and completeness, to any known before. Though some of his classes appear natural, he was less anxious about them, and yielded even to the opinion of some other eminent men of his age, to define the genera of the diseases by a mere narration of those symptoms which most usually occur in them, clearly strike our senses, serve to distinguish them from others like them, and are coexistent or succeeding one another,'as in intermittent and exanthematic fevers. He admitted, at times, the occasional cause of the disease obvious to the senses, into the definition, when the symptoms alone did not distinguish it sufficiently from others of a different nature, but wisely excluded any hypothesis relating to the proximate cause, avoided as much as he could symptoms occurring in the commencement of the disease and not easily remembered by the patient, or such as depend upon the uncertain duration of it, and he seldom swerved from the rule, that if by general consent a name exists, covering a certain number of symptoms, this name should not be given to a number of other symptoms.

The great men, whose characters I have just sketched, when meeting with phenomena they could not explain upon solid grounds, had recourse to speculations, which they communicated to others with modesty, and sparingly, as mere conjectures, which ought not to have influence in the practice of physic. But many medical men, in ancient and modern times, disposed to deviate from the straight and safe path marked out by wisdom and experience, were lost in the labyrinth of their own imagination, and hindered the advancement of the science. Some of them, not satisfied to base their practice upon the investigation of the remote causes, labored in vain to discover the proximate, by comparing the phenomena of diseases with anatomical, physiological and chemical principles, and even with the most absurd and superstitious notions, and became the authors of an erroneous and highly mischievous system of pathology. Others, misled by indolence and credulity, and incapable of thinking for themselves, adhere mechanically to the dogmas of their teachers, and, as it often happens, are governed by mean avarice, considering their profession a mere trade to obtain wealth by any means, be they fair or foul. There are others, on the contrary, who, impelled by an inordinate love of novelty, and destitute of fixed principles, catch at everything new to them, without consideration, and give it up again as hastily at the appearance of something else that strikes their fancy. Some of these, too impatient to adopt the slow but safer method of induction, and supposing the laws of nature to be less in number than they really are, appear ever ready to build up new theories upon far-fetched or imaginary analogies, shut their eyes to all difficulties in the way, and treat those with contempt that venture to start objections against their favorite schemes. Among these latter characters there are some who grasp with enthusiasm a theory or proposition, they think new, and cover its author and his product with such fulsome and extravagant praise, as to raise a suspicion, though probably unfounded, that they wish only to appear before the public as judges and protectors of scientific improvement. I have seen an instance of it in your Journal of the 27th of April last, where an all-important French discovery is announced with all the pomp and circumstance of panegyric. But after reading the communication with great curiosity and attention, I was unfortunate enough not to find anything like a new discovery, the discriminating character of every well-described disease in special pathology being founded upon the same principle the so called discovery rests upon, namely, upon a comparison of the frequency of certain symptoms in a disease, with the frequency the same appear in other diseases; or, in other words, upon a greater constancy and invariableness of certain symptoms in a disease, which was a perfectly known principle to all pathologists in ancient and modern times, and such discovered symptoms were and are named, symtomata frequentiora, morbo perpetua, pathognomonica. I hope the author of that communication will not be offended, when told that a writer on so grave a subject as the investigation of the nature of disease, if he allow his imagination to soar far beyond the region of sober truth, incurs the danger of having his intellect questioned, as much as his taste; and that there are many medical men in the United States, subscribers to the Boston Medical Journal, who will smile at the strange vagary of a heated imagination, which would fain persuade not only young students, but sedate old men, that diseases have never been investigated in any age or nation, until three French stars, the brightest in the constellation of science, arose and illuminated our firmament, and bestowed upon the benighted world a most blessed law of perfect certainty, the divine power of which inspires us with the only true theory, enables us to work a perfect cure of all diseases at sight of them, and reveals to us the mysterious relations of medicines to morbid action, hitherto entirely hidden to mankind; that our revered Hippocrates, Boerhaave, Cullen, and other eminent physicians, knew nothing about induction or generalization, were ignoramuses in pathology and therapeutics, unable to reason correctly, and that their works are less than useless to the medical student! What a pity that these great men, as they are vulgarly called, had not the chance to exercise their talents *a la mode de Paris*, nor wit enough to discover that leeches, lavements and soup maigre constitute the best selection of the whole materia medica, are alone worthy to be preserved in the temple of Hygeia, and the only true panacea in existence!

The causes, I have stated, that kept back the improvement of medical science, arose, in my opinion, chiefly from the usual method of medical education, which, like the tuition in common schools, consists almost entirely in the endeavors of the teachers to fill the memory of the pupils with a confused mass of mere words, the meaning of which they cannot understand. A general principle is a compound of single ideas, united in one by induction, and then marked or inclosed within a word. If the student have even the most faithful memory, which is not often the case, and remember the word, and the principle it covers, he cannot, after all, being ignorant of the sensual ingredients of the composition, form a correct and clear idea of it, and will have but a confused and obscure impression, which he can neither comprehend nor apply to any intellectual or practical use. Suppose a very able and experienced professor delivers, in one of his lectures, good practical principles upon the important difference of the pulse in inflammatory and typhous fevers, which surely rests upon sensual perception; is it in the power of the student, who probably never felt a pulse in his life before, to understand what he hears, or to derive any benefit from it? But suppose, and the supposition is indeed too often a reality, the lecturer be fond of explaining his principles by referring to the causæ proximæ and the modus operandi of medicines, the student will be very apt to imbibe the proud but unfounded notion that our science is a regular and perfect system, defining the causes and means of all diseases, to take mere changeable and erroneous opinions for indisputable truths, to fix these strong and early impressions in his mind, and to adhere to them during life. How much better instructed would he be, if placed in a situation in which he could early discover, himself, that all we know of the operation of causes and means, amounts to this—that certain external causes occasion this or that disease, and certain medicines, we find by observation, have such and such effects, and that finally this experience is the only rational foundation upon which all practice can be built.

The only practicable way for a student to obtain an intuitive knowledge of the simple observations and experiments, from which the principles are deduced, is a daily intercourse with the sick, from which he would, as the following conſiderations prove, reap benefit he could never draw from books or lectures alone: It is a fact, that all we see with our own eyes makes a deeper and more laſting impreſſion on our mind than what we learn from deſcriptions, and that there are many circumſtances in diseaſes and medicines of which it is difficult to give correct ideas—as, for inſtance, the various changes in the face, the eyes, the pulſe, the reſpiration, the voice, the ſmell, the taſte, the different degrees of heat, &c., and every experienced man has, therefore, more knowledge than he can communicate to others; that in ſyſtems, each diſeaſe is deſcribed as exiſting ſingly by itſelf, but in practice they are found complicated under various forms, and cannot be deſcribed, nor practical, general rules applied to them. It is alſo well known that many obſervations are not related completely, and we find in medical books a multitude of falſe or exaggerated accounts of the effects of particular medicines, originating in avarice, vanity, credulity, warm imagination, or weak underſtanding. But the ſtudent, in a daily viſitation of the ſick, will acquire the habit of obſerving and inveſtigating the truth of general principles by the teſt of experience, will diſcover ſome unfounded, ſome partially true, with many exceptions and limitations; yea, even the moſt probable indications, and many highly recommended remedies, will often diſappoint and convince him of the uncertainty of theoretical information; he will find how far the different branches of medical ſcience and medical inveſtigations in general guide towards the main end, to the prevention and cure of diſeaſes. By becoming acquainted with the whims and weakneſſes of patients, he will learn to bear and direct their tempers, and mitigate their ſufferings, acquire gradually a ſkill in treating the ſick in general, a readineſs in obſerving, a preſence and tranquillity of mind, a firmneſs and reſolution in ſudden and alarming caſes; in this ſchool he will remain free from pride, from a dogmatical and ſelf-conceited ſpirit, become modeſt, not too confident of his own opinions, nor too ready to aſcribe the death of every patient to incurability. Practically acquainted with his limited knowledge, with the difficulty and imperfection of medical ſcience, his ſympathy with the afflictions of his fellow beings will incite him to purſue his ſtudies with zeal, and to entertain the hope of contributing his part towards the advancement of the noble ſcience he loves.

I have been fully perſuaded, for many years, that our ſcience would be greatly improved, and thouſands of valuable lives ſaved every year, if medical education were made more practical and moral; if ſtudents would be obliged by law, after having acquired ſufficient practical knowledge in anatomy and ſtudied natural hiſtory and chemiſtry, &c., to attend a well-endowed hoſpital under the care of experienced phyſicians and ſurgeons, and ſtudy thus for a year, at leaſt, the practice of phyſic, before they were allowed to hear lectures upon phyſiology and the theory and practice of medicine and ſurgery. If, at the ſame time, through the whole courſe of their academical ſtudies, good practical moral principles were inculcated, the number of thoſe members of the profeſſion that degrade it by the meaneſt vices, by envy, avarice and ſlander, &c. would be much leſſened. It is generally known that the violation of the great moral law by practitioners of phyſic in many places is not only overlooked, but sanctioned as a species of competition, useful to the community, and which permits any one, who entertains the idea that his interest demands it, to rob his rival of character and living, either by open slander, or by sly and artful insinuations, and to enjoy in triumph the spoil of felony. There is no art or science, in which this vile conduct can be pursued as successfully, and by the meanest capacity, as in the practice of physic. In all other arts and sciences, the improvement of those that exercise them, promotes and insures their interest. The public being capable of judging for itself, in some measure at least, will reward an artist, who can place superior works before it; a lawyer, whose knowledge, sagacity and eloquence appears in court; or a minister, whose addresses make an impression upon the heads and hearts of his audience. But who are the judges of the merit of a physician? Not the majority of the people, who, alike ignorant of the healthy and diseased condition of the body, consider the same characters the only judges of medical merit, whose private interest it is to condemn any one superior to themselves. It happens, therefore, often indeed, that young men of loose morals, little knowledge and capacity, and without experience, do supplant their superiors in every respect, and attain their end by flattering the political, sectarian or other prejudices of the majority, by carefully concealing the merits of their rivals, and by traducing the characters of the latter on every favorable opportunity. Let, for example, an experienced physician of the same town save the lives of ever so many, laboring under a certain disease generally pronounced incurable, by means not known and employed in common practice, but lose perhaps one in a hundred, his piratical competitors will endeavor to blast his professional character among the ignorant, fanatic and credulous multitude, and ruin, if possible, his pecuniary interest.

The governments of literary institutions, in free countries even, are, for various reasons not necessary here to detail, either disinclined or too restricted by charters, &c., to bring about a reformation in the intellectual and moral education of students, or to hinder the violation of moral laws among them. But it is a fact, that the efforts of a small number of wise, virtuous and patriotic philanthropists, independent in circumstances and mind, have worked wonders in the United States, and their sway has been all-powerful and infinitely beneficial in every period of this nation's existence. By their influence the monster intemperance, that threatened the total destruction of this country, has received, within a few years, a mortal wound, though supported by long-continued and strongly-fixed habits, and by mighty and extensive interests. It is more than probable that such noble characters, whom we find in every State of the Union, could also rescue medical science from its present degradation, and give, like Lord Bacon, Dr. Hales, Boyle, and other benefactors of mankind, the greatest impulse to its lasting improvement, if they would make themselves acquainted with its theoretical and practical principles, not with the view to derive a livelihood from this acquired knowledge, but to apply it for the benefit of mankind. Of all the thousand schemes of reforming abuses, of exposing fraud, and enlightening the ignorant, and of promoting the welfare and happiness of society, I know of none that would produce more general good, and be more instrumental in alleviating human suffering, than an undertaking of this kind, by a society of the most learned, wise and virtuous philanthropists of the United States. C. L. Seeger, M.D.

Northampton, June 15, 1836.

MEDICAL APPLICATION OF GALVANISM.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

Sir—I have lately contrived a modification of Professor Henry's apparatus for obtaining sparks and shocks from the Calorimoter, which must supersede all other instruments at present in use for the application of galvanism in cases of paresis, &c. I refrain from giving a particular description of it at present; but as it promises to be of service to the medical world, these proleptical remarks may perhaps be acceptable. By a self-regulating apparatus, the shocks may be made to succeed each other with almost any degree of rapidity and strength. The sensation thus produced is quite unlike and less disagreeable than that from the deflagrator. It will also undoubtedly prove a superior instrument for the application of M. Palabrat's discovery, viz. the transmission of remedial substances through any part of the body, by galvanism.

Salem, June 18, 1836. I am yours truly,

C. G. Page.

DR. PEIRSON'S CRITICISM ON MR. GRAHAM.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

Sir—It is with extreme regret that I find myself obliged to trouble you with another communication. Your Journal of the 8th inst. reached me in Northampton. I was exceedingly astonished at the language imputed to Dr. Peirson concerning me. My acquaintance with Dr. P. had been limited, but such as had given me a very favorable impression of him, and I had not the least doubt but I was regarded by him with friendly and kind feelings. I therefore did not expect such language from him; and, indeed, could not believe that he would do me such injustice. I therefore immediately addressed him a line, requesting an explanation. In his reply he says, "I should be sorry if the remarks imputed to me in the Journal of the 8th inst. should be deemed an impeachment of your moral character. I entirely disclaim any such meaning, nor do I believe any person present supposed I intended to convey such meaning."

The doctor then requests me to come to his house in Salem, and offers a frank and full explanation. I hastened to Salem, and was received by him in a gentlemanly and courteous manner, and received such an explanation as he had promised. I am not at liberty to use the precise language which he uttered, but the sum of the explanation is this. Dr. Bartlett, to justify himself for countenancing Williams, plead that other members of the Society had done the same thing in regard to me; and in order to make the conduct of those members as offensive as possible, he thought it worthy of him to use such language as he did in relation to me. Dr. Peirson, in replying to Dr. B., in order to exculpate those whom the latter had accused, endeavored to make it appear that the countenance which I had received had not been spontaneous, but was procured by deception and pertinacity. Dr. P. does not, however, affirm this, but supposes it might be so. But this was wholly unnecessary. Dr. Warren needed no vindication from the charge of Dr. Bartlett. There is no analogy between the two cases. I have nothing to do with medicine—deal in no secret remedies—but in all cases where medical treatment is necessary in those who come to me, I send them to the physician. I am a public lecturer on the Science of Human Life, and it would be just as proper to impeach Dr. Shattuck for countenancing Professor Silliman's lectures on chemistry, as to impeach Dr. Warren for countenancing my lectures on physiology. But if Dr. Warren had done wrong, it would not be just to throw the blame on me. It is not true that "the medical profession have repudiated me as soon as they have discovered my true character." But it is true that the medical profession generally, from an unjust prejudice, are opposed to me before they become acquainted with me; and, as a general statement, it is true that medical gentlemen become friendly to me just in proportion as they become truly acquainted with me. Neither is it true that I ever fastened myself upon any one, and by my pertinacity obtained those certificates which have been published. So far as I know anything of the matter, every one of those certificates has been spontaneously given. I sincerely regret, for the honor of the profession, which I respect, that a gentleman who is so much an ornament to that profession and to society as Dr. A. L. Peirson, should have been led into such an error of judgment as to do injustice to an unoffending individual; and I am confident that he now equally regrets it with myself. S. GRAHAM.

Boston, June 15, 1836.

OPERATIONS AT THE LONDON OPHTHALMIC INFIRMARY.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

THE twenty-ninth and thirtieth annual report of this Ophthalmic Institution, founded by John Cunningham Saunders, contains the following remarkable report of operations performed for Cataracts and Artificial Pupil.

From the 1st of January 1833, to the 31st December, 1834.

Operations for Cataract in both eyes.

	Admitted.		Result.
By Extraction in both eyes	3	Successful	3
By Needle	1	do.	1

Operations for Cataract in one eye.

By Extraction	53	Successful	46
By Needle	41	do.	40
By Depression	5	do.	5
Congenital Cataract	3	do.	3
	106		98

For Artificial Pupil	27	Successful	24

The report then states the entire number of operations, and of patients admitted to the Infirmary in 1833 and 1834, as follows.

Operations for Cataract	106
Other operations (Artificial Pupil and others)	30
Under treatment	5
In-door patients not requiring operations	50
Total of in-door patients	191
Total of out-door patients in 1833	5277
Total of out-door patients in 1834	5332
Grand total	10,800
Total number of patients operated on in 1833 and 1834	136
Successful in do.	125
Total of in-door patients cured of Cataract or closed Pupil, including *one hundred and thirty-five born blind*, admitted from the 25th of March, 1805 (when the Institution was first opened), to the 31st December, 1834	1006
Total of in and out-door patients admitted in 1833 and 1834	10,991
Total of patients admitted from the opening of the Infirmary, on the 25th of March, 1805, to the 31st December, 1834	111,624
Total of physicians and surgeons admitted as pupils at the Infirmary during the same period	1290

The most remarkable feature in the above report, not excepting even the immense number of applicants—there being another similar institution, the Westminster Ophthalmic Infirmary—in a surgical point of view, is the astounding success affirmed of the operations for Cataract and Artificial Pupil. It may be a question, indeed, as to the exact definition implied by the term *successful*,* applied in this report to the results of these operations. If we are given by it to understand that the patients recovered from the immediate effects of the operations, without having received any injury to the organ, or with perhaps the power of vision somewhat improved, we may grant that it is possible. Being aware of the surprising property of the eye, with which it is endowed by nature for the preservation of the faculty of sight, to endure severe and repeated operations without serious or permanent detriment, we admit that in this sense the proportion of successful cases may have been correctly stated.

Of 133 operations, most of which are acknowledged on all hands to require, for their successful performance, much skill, experience and self-command on the part of the operator, 122 are declared to have been successful. Of the mode of operation for Cataract by Extraction, McKenzie observes, "It is too nice and dangerous an operation to be undertaken without the utmost precaution, composure and steadiness."

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* If by the term *blindness*, we understand the "loss of useful vision," then a successful operation would imply the restoration of that degree of vision.

The same author furnishes important " facts as data for an ultimate prognosis in Cataract," and Dr. Tartra, surgeon at the Hotel Dieu, to whose cases he refers, adds, " that it is generally thought that two out of five patients, operated upon for Cataract, recover their sight."

Dupuytren performed the operation for Cataract upon seventeen patients by Keratonixis, as it is called, which consists in depressing, but more generally breaking up the Cataract from before backwards, the needle being passed through the cornea. Of these,[*] " seventeen out of twenty-one recovered; that is, four fifths, plus one, of the patients operated on. And this result does not differ sensibly from that obtained by M. Dupuytren, by puncturing the sclerotica," that is, by the posterior operation, as it is termed by Saunders. But these operations by division or solution are manifestly less destructive to the organ of vision, and though slower in their progress in effecting a cure, are not perhaps less certain, than that by extraction, which seems to have been the prevailing mode of operating at the London Infirmary.

In conclusion, we may be permitted to express a hope that other Ophthalmic institutions will furnish the medical public with the results of these important operations, in order that by comparing such data prepared with care and accuracy, we may be enabled to form some approximation, at least, to correctness in our prognosis. E. J. D.

June, 1836.

BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

BOSTON, JUNE 29, 1836.

SURGERY ILLUSTRATED.[†]

NEW books, like strange faces, are generally sure of being gazed upon; but they require intrinsic merit to secure a permanent character.

SURGERY ILLUSTRATED is a generous volume as it respects exterior dimensions—being a royal octavo of fine proportions, with a fair type, broad margin, and fifty-two lithographic plates. The execution of some of the drawings is altogether on too cheap a scale; the more beautiful such illustrations are made, the more valuable:—nothing can be too good, too costly, or too accurate, in a manual of operative surgery. Let it not be understood, however, that there is a disposition to be hypercritical on this point. In fact, the very worst of the series would be far better than nothing in guiding the inexperienced operator. The idea of exhibiting the real appearance of a fractured bone, as it is, with the action of muscles most concerned in replacing the ragged extremities, seems to have been a great improvement upon the old quarto authors, who thought it quite sufficient to describe, in learned tediousness, the very things of all others which a beginner would like to *see*, as well as read about.

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[*] Clinical Lectures on Surgery, by Dupuytren, translated by A. Sidney Doane, M.D.

[†] Surgery Illustrated. Compiled from the works of Cutler, Hind, Velpeau, and Blasius. With fifty-two plates. By A. Sidney Doane, A. M. M.D. New York, published by Harper and Brothers—1836.

One of the principal excellencies of this compilation consists in this, viz. every operation of importance, treated of in the work, is made perfectly plain, even to the comprehension of a tyro, by exhibiting a patient in the act of being operated upon.

Thus, for example, the manner of introducing a ligature or forceps for the extraction of nasal polypi—the position of patient, operator and assistants, in making an incision for strangulated hernia ; lithotomy, lithotrity, beside many other equally exciting and difficult operations, are so exactly pictured, that a person who had never witnessed the actual process could scarcely be mistaken in the modus operandi. The colored illustrations, the particular object of which is to explain the true mode of placing ligatures upon the arteries whenever it is practicable, will hereafter be considered indispensable in future treatises on surgery. Though there is a degree of stiffness in the appearance of the vessels, rendering it somewhat difficult to designate which was designed for a vein and which for an artery, it does not seem to require the same key that the Kent landlord had written upon his sign—" *this is a man—and that is a horse.*"

If there is any part of this new work which gives it a claim, beyond any other, to the favor of surgeons, section third, beginning at the sixty-fifth page, on fractures of the extremities, must be the one. There are, in the first place, clear and distinct descriptions of the external appearance when the bone has been broken; and not only this, but the appearance when any process of a bone has suffered from sudden violence. Causes of displacement, and the treatment, as practised by the most eminent surgeons in the world, follow ; and, lastly, as though the feeling of responsibility actuated the author, if he in any way neglected imparting all the information in his power, a succession of diagrams are interspersed, truly graphic. These are superior to the accompanying pictorial delineations, notwithstanding their coarseness.

On bandages, bandaging, and the technicalities in the art of tearing cotton cloth into strips, the doctor has expended his strength for nothing : these topics, each and all of them, are nuisances in any book. We have heard very learned professors harp, day after day, in the lecture room, on the very important business of scraping charpie, plumasseau and bourdonnet, exerting prodigious intellectual powers to impress the audience with the grandeur of knowing how to roll the tampon, tie the meche, cut T bandages, and some other similar directions which have no bearing at all upon the successful practice of surgery. Every operator adapts his rollers, compresses and crosses to the condition of things, wholly regardless of these arbitrary introductory laws to the first principles of the art chirurgical. This, after all, is only an individual opinion, opposed to that of Mr. Cutler's Practical Guide. Although dressings are mechanical contrivances, requiring the exercise of very little ingenuity, there has been a growing propensity, from immemorial time, to create the science of bandaging. For ourselves, we fervently desire the expurgation of the whole matter in detail, from all succeeding essays of this kind.

Dr. Doane expressly remarks, in the preface, that he makes no pretentions to originality, " thinking that the profession will be benefited more by a compilation of facts than by an original book of theory." He therefore, at the onset, shows himself an honest man, which deserves commendation, particularly at a juncture when so many are ambitious of being thought originals.

Another advantage of Dr. Doane's work over any other of modern date, arises from the circumstance of its being a compendium of the practice of illustrious surgeons of Europe. We are furnished, in a condensed form, with the essence of standard writers, whose productions have but a very limited circulation in this country—indeed, to many, they are inaccessible.

With the highest feelings of respect for the talents and untiring industry of the author, we sincerely commend his "Surgery Illustrated" to the patronage of the profession. Were it suffered to remain upon the publishers' shelves, it would bring a reproach upon the good sense and liberality of American medical practitioners.

DIFFERENCE OF OPINION.

In giving place to the following, we intend to conclude, so far as the Medical Journal is concerned, the Graham controversy. It has occupied much space for some months past, and we regret that so small a part of it has been devoted to the facts which alone can affect the question, and which were hoped to be elicited when the discussion began.

To the Editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.

Sir—The individual who was last week the object of Mr. Graham's remarks, begs leave to decline the *honor* of "magnanimity" for having *confessed* "that on reviewing it since publication, he perceived that he had been too unguarded and too sweeping in his statements, and too severe in his personal reflections." His extreme obtuseness of intellect (when last subjected to the inquisition) made him suppose that there was a "*difference*," and that *perhaps so* did not always mean *yes*, nor *perhaps not* necessarily mean *no*. Though often urged, at one time with adulation, at another with a threat, and on other occasions by appeals to his interest—to his christian principles and magnanimity, he never thought it expedient to receive Mr. Graham for his Father Confessor, though he at all times treated the gentleman with all the courtesy he was capable of. He might now show his "magnanimity" by correcting some *small misstatements* and *mistakes* into which Mr. Graham has *honestly* fallen; but he deems it unnecessary, and he trusts that no friend will feel called upon, in his behalf, to reply to that gentleman's performance. "He is joined to his idols, let him alone." *June* 23.

STEAMING IN CONNECTICUT.

A Correspondent in Connecticut gives us the following particulars of a case which recently came under his notice.

Miss E. Fox, aged about 30, had been subject to slight epileptic fits for about two years, occurring irregularly, sometimes as often as once a month, and sometimes not oftener than once in two or three months. She was importuned to take the advice of a Thomsonian in Hartford, and had been under his care about a week, when she died, immediately or very soon after coming out of the hot bath. Mr. Fox, her father, informs me that he saw her the day before her death, and that she expressed a wish to return home, but concluded to stay and be cured, and that he could not learn the particulars of her death, but the doctor said the fits killed her, for on coming out of the bath she had six or seven in succession, till she died. It is reported, also, that after the bath she had the cold dash and the lobelia emetic, and that she died in the operation of the latter. I believe she had never persevered in a judicious course of medicine, though she had been very much benefited last winter by taking stramonium seeds, recommended by a person not a physician. She however took them in such large doses as soon to cause confused vision, and they were consequently discontinued ; but the fact itself of the improvement shows that she might very easily have been cured under proper treatment.—One of the many *soi-disant* philanthropists of the present day, who had had the Thomsonian practice in his family, and who was busy in recommending it to others, once told me—what he seemed to believe—that the Thomsonians could give a man an emetic immediately after he had eaten a hearty dinner of beef steak, and that the emetic would clear out all the bile from the *very bottom* of his stomach, and yet the beef steak should remain unmolested. This man was not a fool, but knew enough to get a living in the town of East Windsor, Conn. Such people seem to have for their motto, " Credo quia impossibile est."

Anonymous Letters.—Notwithstanding the frequently repeated request that correspondents would in all cases favor us with their names and address, anonymous letters are continually pouring in upon us, till we are out of all manner of patience. The editor pledges himself to make no indiscreet or improper use of the name of any correspondent. Authors of anonymous papers sent to our personal address, the last week, would confer a special favor by allowing us to know them. There is one, particularly, which is positively unfathomable ; it should have been accompanied by a pocket compass and guide book.—For the favors we are unremittingly receiving, of an available kind, we tender our sincere acknowledgments.

Medical Miscellany.—Dr. Judd, of the Sandwich Island mission, has commenced the preparation of an elementary work on Anatomy, in the language of the Islands. Application has been made to the author of the Class Book of Anatomy, published about a year since in Boston, for the use of the engravings of that work, to illustrate the work of Dr. Judd.—Dr. Dunglison, of Baltimore, has been called to visit ex-President Madison.—Dr. John A. Kerney, U. S. A. has been appointed chief of the medical staff, for the southern expedition against the Indians ; and Dr. G. B. McKnight, assistant surgeon.—Dr. Draper has been lecturing in Philadelphia on coughs, colds and consumptions.—Dr. McCash, of the East India Medical Service, is publishing a series of valuable topographical and statistical papers on the kingdom of Assam, near the Himalaya mountains, on the western boundary of China.—A volume of 343 pages, octavo, has been published, by order of the East India government, by John Grant Malcom, of the Madras Medical establishment, on the treatment of a disease called, in that country, " beri beri."—Dr. Tyler (in Europe, of course), is making astonishing cures of rheumatism by a magnetic wheel. It cures more ills than the hygeian pills.—" Can the leprosy be introduced with vaccination ? " was a question put, not long since, to a celebrated physician. His answer was, " The vaccine virus has actually the power of diminishing the violence of other diseases : it cannot be the vehicle of any but its own infection."—A physician in Charlestown writes us that the statement made by Dr. Bartlett, before the Boston Med. Association, in relation to the wife of Jarvis the musician, is " utterly destitute of truth in every particular."

To Correspondents.—Dr. Bell's "Statistics of the Insane in New Hampshire," and a Case of Disease of the Eye, will appear next week.

Died—At Key West, Dr. Benjamin F. Nourse, of Washington city, Assistant Surg. U. S. A.—At New Orleans, Dr. George C. Livingston, aged 27, a native of New York.—At San Jacinto, Texas, of a wound received in battle, Dr. William Mosely.—At the Boston Quarantine Ground, Rainsford Island, of smallpox, Mr. Huntingdon Porter, aged 23, a native of Rye, N. H. and a student of the Medical School of Lexington, Ky.

Whole number of deaths in Boston for the week ending June 25, 27. Males, 13—Females, 14.
Of marasmus, 1—lung fever, 3—dropsy, 2—croup, 1—paralytic, 1—cancer, 1—fits, 1—dropsy on the brain, 3—bowel complaint, 1—mortification, 1—consumption, 5—disease of the heart, 1—palsy, 1—smallpox, 1—infantile, 1—suicide, 1—child-bed, 1. Stillborn, 3.

MEDICAL INSTRUCTION.

The subscribers are associated for the purpose of giving a complete course of medical instruction, and will receive pupils on the following terms:

The pupils will be admitted to the practice of the Massachusetts General Hospital, and will receive clinical lectures on the cases they witness there. Instruction, by lectures or examinations, will be given in the intervals of the public lectures, every week day.

On Midwifery, and the Diseases of Women and Children, and on Chemistry	by	Dr. Channing.
On Physiology, Pathology, Therapeutics, and Materia Medica - - - -	"	Dr. Ware.
On the Principles and Practice of Surgery - - - - - - - - - - -	"	Dr. Otis.
On Anatomy - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -	"	Dr. Lewis.

The students are provided with a room in Dr. Lewis's house, where they have access to a large library. Lights and fuel without any charge. The opportunities for acquiring a knowledge of Anatomy are not inferior to any in the country.

The fees are $100—to be paid in advance. No credit given, except on sufficient security of some person in Boston, nor for a longer period than six months.

Applications are to be made to Dr. Walter Channing, Tremont Street, opposite the Tremont House, Boston.

WALTER CHANNING,
JOHN WARE,
GEORGE W. OTIS, JR.
WINSLOW LEWIS, JR.

Jan 20—1yep

TO THE MEDICAL PROFESSION.

Improved Surgeons' Trusses for the immediate relief and radical cure of Hernia, invented by Heber Chase, M.D. of Philadelphia.

These instruments for the treatment of the several forms of reducible hernia are now offered to the attention of the physicians and surgeons of this city. They have been submitted to the test of experience, by their successful application, in a large number of cases, under the immediate inspection of many distinguished medical gentlemen of Philadelphia. The Committee of the Philadelphia Medical Society, who were appointed to investigate the merits of the various instruments in use for the treatment of hernia, reported in favor of those of Dr. Chase, to which report the profession are referred, as published in the February No. of the American Journal of Medical Science. They are also highly recommended by Profs. Horner, Jackson, Gibson, McLellan and Rush, of Philadelphia—Drs. Harris and Bryant, surgeons of the U. S. navy, who testify not only to the superior claims of the instrument, but to the honorable and strictly professional course of the inventor. These instruments will be applied by E. W. LEACH, M.D. No. 113 Hanover Street.

Boston, May 18, 1836. 3m.

B. F. HAYS'S EASY CHAIR

Will be exhibited to the citizens of Boston for a few days. This invaluable piece of furniture received a gold medal at the late *fair* in New York; has obtained public notoriety, and the entire confidence of every observer, as being the *ne plus ultra* for the *nursery*, and not less adapted for an article of *luxury*, in the parlor. It is emphatically the *friend* of the afflicted. It is so constructed that the body or limbs of the occupant can be placed by himself at any desired angle, from a perpendicular to a horizontal position; he can also place himself on *wheels*, *side* or *lateral rockers*, while occupying the chair, even with a fractured limb. It is easily changed from a *chair* to a *bed*, *crib*, or *cradle*—can be made in any style of plainness or elegance to suit the purchaser.

Physicians, ladies and gentlemen, and invalids; cabinet, chair-makers and upholsterers, and all such as wish to examine the article, or purchase the right for manufacturing, are invited to call at the Marlboro' Hotel, 229 Washington street, where the subscribers will be in attendance to exhibit the *chair* to those who may favor them with their notice. HAYS & PECK.

Boston, June 18th, 1836.

THE BOSTON MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL is published every Wednesday, by D. CLAPP, JR. at 184 Washington Street, corner of Franklin Street, to whom all communications must be addressed, *post-paid.* It is also published in Monthly Parts, each Part containing the weekly numbels of the preceding month, stitched in a cover. J. V. C. SMITH, M.D. Editor.—Price $3,00 a year in advance, $3,50 after three months, and $4,00 if not paid within the year.—Agents allowed every seventh copy *gratis.*—Orders from a distance must be accompanied by payment in advance, or satisfactory reference.—Postage the same as for a newspaper.